
Detailed Fiscal Analysis

The bill would prohibit certain persons from operating a powercraft powered by more than ten horsepower on the waters in this state unless the person has successfully completed either a safe boater course approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators or a proficiency examination and received a certificate of completion. The bill also creates new violations for persons who violate the safe boater course and certificate requirement.

Currently, safe boater courses are offered by DNR's Division of Watercraft, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, and the US Power Squadron. A free on-line exam and certificate is offered by Boat Owners Association of the US on their web site (www.boatus.com). The Division of Watercraft offers, free of charge, a general boating class with a proficiency exam and issues a certificate at the end of the class. The department estimates that they test approximately 2,000-3,000 boaters per year. The department has seen roughly a 10% increase in the number of boaters being tested over the last 3-4 years. The Coast Guard Auxiliary and the US Power Squadron both use volunteer instructors and charge a nominal fee (\$8-\$30) for materials. The Coast Guard Auxiliary and the US Power Squadron each test approximately 2,000 Ohio boaters per year.

The Division of Watercraft estimates that there would probably be an increase of less than 10,000 boaters in the first few years for safe boater courses. The department is projecting that this number could significantly increase in 6-8 years as the date/age requirement starts to take effect. The department estimates that in the first few years, any costs associated with the additional boater courses could be absorbed. Depending on the demand for classes, the department estimates that in future years there may be a need for additional instructors and proctors. A spokesperson for the Coast Guard Auxiliary anticipates that they would be able to accommodate any increase in the number of persons wanting to take safe boater courses.

A person who violated the safe boater course/certificate requirement would be guilty of a misdemeanor of the fourth degree if the violation is not related to a collision, injury to a person, or damage to property (maximum jail term of 30 day, maximum fine of \$250 or both). If the violation is related to a collision, injury to a person, or damage to property, it is a misdemeanor of the third degree (maximum jail term of 60 days, maximum fine of \$500 or both). Counties and municipalities could experience a minimal increase in expenditures for potential court hearings, and counties could experience a minimal increase in costs for prosecution and incarceration. Counties would receive fine revenues for cases charged under state law.

Background Information

- ◆ The total number of registered boats in Ohio for 1996 was 398,388.
- ◆ The Division of Watercraft awarded \$100,000 to 14 non-profit organizations for Boating Safety Education programs in FY1996. Funding for Watercraft Educational Grants is \$100,000 in each year of the current biennium.
- ◆ The Division of Watercraft is receiving approximately \$1.3 million in FY1998 and \$1.4 million in FY1999 from the US Coast Guard for boating safety education activities and to support watercraft enforcement activities. A breakout of these monies (education vs. enforcement) was not available.

□ *LBO staff: Joni Leone, Budget/Policy Analyst*

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